

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 LAGOS 000279

SIPDIS

STATE PASS DOE FOR DAS JBRODMAN AND CGAY  
TREASURY FOR ASEVERENS AND SRENENDER  
COMMERCE FOR KBURRESS  
STATE PASS TRANSPORTATION FOR MARAD  
STATE PASS USAID FOR GWEYNAND AND SLAWAETZ  
STATE FOR DS/IP/AF, AF/EX, DS/IP/OPO, DS/ICI/PII, DS/DSS/ITA  
LONDON PASS TO AMBASSADOR CAMPBELL

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/22/2016

TAGS: [EPET](#) [PGOV](#) [ASEC](#) [PTER](#) [KHLs](#) [PINR](#) [ETRD](#) [CASC](#) [NI](#)

SUBJECT: NIGERIA: HOSTAGE-TAKING, SITREP #7

REF: LAGOS 274 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: Consul General Brian L. Browne for Reasons 1.4 (D & E)

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Hostage Welfare Update  
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1. (C) Sources in Warri told PolCouns that AmCit hostage Macon Hawkins refuses to eat or drink and is exhibiting signs of depression. According to those contacts the other hostages are comfortable and the medicine sent for the hostages has been received. Media sources claim they will have a photograph and video of the hostages later today. However, Delta State Governor Ibori was not sanguine about chances of convincing the kidnappers to agree to a photograph/video of the hostages for proof of life purposes. Ijaw leader Chief Edwin Clark said he has been in contact with the hostage-takers and was given a written note from the hostages listing the medicines they need. We are attempting to obtain the note.

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Negotiations Update  
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2. (C) In a conversation today, Delta State Governor Ibori confirmed his formation of a negotiating committee, chaired by Warri-based Ijaw Chief Jonathan Ari, and not Chief Clark as previously believed. Chief Clark is a member of the committee, however. Ibori confirmed negotiations had been opened with the militants but complained multiple lines of communication from different parties to the kidnappers has provided too high a profile and further emboldened them. Consul General and British Deputy High Commissioner assured Ibori neither the US nor UK was in contact with the kidnappers. Both stressed the importance of obtaining proof of life. The Governor confirms militant leader Government Ekpemupolo's cousin was killed in a recent skirmish with Nigerian military. Ibori said the militants indicated they might be amenable to releasing the hostages after burial rites are completed. Ibori said the date for the ceremony has not yet been set. (Comment: Ijaw burials are multi-day affairs. If taken at face value, this augurs against an immediate release but suggests the possibility would improve, hopefully by next week. However, this could well be a stalling tactic. In an aside, an aide to Ibori told the British Deputy that the militants are using the hostages as human shields to protect them from GON military activity, and that the militants are aware of higher than normal military action in the area. End comment.)

3. (C) Three Ijaw community leaders heard from negotiators that talks were stalled over the kidnappers' demand for demilitarization of the Niger Delta in Delta State. The kidnappers complained the GON has not shown any willingness to improve conditions in the Delta since the January hostage crisis, and threatened to kill the negotiators if the GON reneged on any pledge made during the current crisis.

4. (S/NF) In line with the comment of Governor Ibori's aide to the British Deputy, community leaders said the militants believe Nigerian military troops in Abak, Akwa Ibom state are training to attack them. (Comment: This indicates the militants have caught wind of the military build-up around Warri. End comment.)

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Energy Update: Shell Facilities Still Closed  
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5. (C) There is no change in the status of damaged or closed Shell facilities, and production remains reduced approximately 550,000 bpd.

6. (C) Power generation remains down by approximately 850 MW (of a total of 3200 MW nationwide) due to a damaged gas feeder line, which cannot be repaired until the security

situation improves.

17. (C) Chevron reported they do not anticipate any significant near-term disruptions in production. Agip, Total, Exxon, and other oil companies also report no production problems.

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Media Update  
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18. (SBU) Delta State Governor Ibori reported the kidnappers gave two conditions for the hostages' release in the media yesterday. The kidnappers are demanding an end to military attacks on their communities, and completion of funeral rites for the Ijaw allegedly killed during the attacks, Ibori said. Media also report air operations have resumed at Osubi Airport in Warri, and the Delta State government is reportedly planning to send relief supplies to the communities heavily damaged by the military.

19. (C) Former Bayelsa State Speaker of the House Boyelayefa Debekeme was arraigned before a Federal High Court in Abuja for allegedly funding terrorism in the Niger Delta. The charges point to Debekeme's activities between December 23, 2005 and January 18, 2006, immediately before and during the last hostage crisis. Bayelsa State Secretary Dr. Igali told us the GON had evidence linking Debekeme to the January hostage-taking.

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Consular Update  
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10. (C) All Consular staff are accounted for. There have been no reports of additional attacks on AmCits.

11. (C) The Foreign Emergency support Team (FEST) arrived today.

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Repatriation Planning  
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12. (C) In preparation for the eventual release of the hostages, Willbros has made open commercial airline reservations for the hostages' return home. Shell will take responsibility for care and transport to Lagos.  
BROWNE